

FBC POWELL, 11-4-18 AM NOTES
"True Grit—The Development of Endurance"
2 Corinthians 6:1-10
13 in Series, "Be Encouraged"

2 Corinthians 11:23-29 (NASB) ²³ "Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. ²⁶ *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; ²⁷ *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸ Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me *of* concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?"

I. The Path of Endurance (vv. 1-3)

A. The Task Assigned (v. 1)

1 Corinthians 15:10 (NASB) "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me."

B. The Time Allotted (v. 2)

"There is a time in God's grace when He may be sought by sinners. The Lord warned the pre-flood world, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever' (Genesis 6:3). Isaiah 55:6 commands, 'Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.' Hosea warned that apostate Israel 'will go with their flocks and herds to seek the Lord, but they will not find Him; He has withdrawn from them (Hosea 5:6).'"
—John MacArthur

2 Corinthians 6:2 (NASB) "At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you. Behold, now is "the acceptable time, behold, now is the day of salvation."

John 6:44 (NASB) "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."

Ephesians 2:1 (NASB) "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins."

Ephesians 2:4-5 (NASB) ⁴ "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."

C. A Tragedy Avoided (v. 3)

II. The Process of Endurance (vv. 4-7)

A. Things That Are Painful (vv. 4-5)

Acts 14:22b (NASB) "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

B. Things That Are Positive (vv. 6-7)

Ephesians 6:10-17 (NASB) ¹⁰ “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

III. The Paradox of Endurance (vv. 8-10)

A. Glory and Dishonor

B. Evil Report and Good Report

C. A Deceiver and a Person of Truth

D. Unknown and Yet Well-Known

E. Dying and Yet Alive

F. Punished and Yet Not Put to Death

G. Sorrowful and Yet Always Rejoicing

Romans 9:2-3 (NASB) ² “That I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”

Philippians 4:4 (NASB) “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!”

H. Poor and Yet Making Many Rich

I. Having Nothing and Yet Possessing All Things

Romans 8:32 (NASB) “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”

Sermon 13: True Grit – The Development of Endurance

2 Corinthians 6:1-10

The word “grit” when applied to a person typically means someone who sticks with their goals despite obstacles, setbacks, and failures. Some synonyms are “fortitude” and “determination”. When Western movie fans think of *True Grit*, they remember the 1969 movie by that name starring John Wayne as Marshall Ruben (Rooster) Cogburn. When I think of true grit, I don’t think first of Marshall Rooster Cogburn; I think of the Apostle Paul – what grit, what determination, what fortitude. I never tire of hearing Paul’s summary of what he had been through in spreading the Gospel and planting churches. It’s more amazing than any work of fiction could ever be. We read about what Paul went through in 2 Corinthians 11:23-29:

Are they servants of Christ? — I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me *of* concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?

And what was it we were complaining about?

From today’s text we are going to be encouraged to develop endurance, true grit. We are going to see how essential that is in the Christian life.

Psychologist Angela Duckworth has written a *New York Times* best seller entitled, *Grit, The Power of Passion and Perseverance*. Here is a description taken from a promo of the book:

In this instant *New York Times* bestseller, pioneering psychologist Angela Duckworth shows anyone striving to succeed—be it parents, students, educators, athletes, or business people—that the secret to outstanding achievement is not talent but a special blend of passion and persistence she calls ‘grit.’ Why do some people succeed and others fail? Sharing new insights from her landmark research, Angela explains why talent is hardly a guarantor of success. Angela has found that grit—a combination of passion and perseverance for a singularly important goal—is the hallmark of high achievers in every domain.

Long before Angela Duckworth wrote her best seller, the Apostle Paul not only taught us about grit, he demonstrated it for us. No person (with the exception of Jesus Himself) faced more opposition than did Paul. In our text, we get insight as to how he persevered, how he became one of the greatest examples of endurance under trial – true grit. Here is why this is important to you, if you desire to please Christ, you will be opposed, disappointed, and you will constantly have obstacles placed on your path. The solution is not giving up; it is endurance, it is true grit. You will face huge obstacles and serious challenges pleasing Christ in your marriage, in raising children, in your job, in your church, and in scores of other attachments and relationships. The solution is not to give up, get depressed, or bolt for the greener pastures (which do not really even exist). Certainly, there are legitimate reasons to change a parenting pattern, leave a ministry or even a church, to change jobs, and even to take decisive action in an abusive or unfaithful marriage. But I’m talking about giving up when you are in the place where God has

placed you, even though it is painful. Endurance is something we all desperately need to develop and deepen.

I want to remind you that God has something better for you than a smooth, “successful” (as the world would call it), comfortable, pain free life. His plan for you is to conform you to the likeness of Christ. If you are His, He will not let up, wait up, or give up on you. He will not only allow uncomfortable, rough, painful, difficult circumstances, He will manufacture many of them. When we run from these unpleasant, uncomfortable things, we miss the blessing of growing close to the Lord, being conformed to the likeness of Christ and developing true grit.

If I had to narrow down to one word what this text is calling for, it would be “endurance”. I plead with you today – do not give up! Do not turn from the path God has planned for you! God is still on His throne and God Himself is enough to get you through! Let’s look closely at this text and learn endurance from the Word of God.

I. The Path of Endurance (vv. 1-3)

The churches that Paul planted and poured his life into, for the most part didn’t appreciate him. While they should have listened to him, trusted him and followed his example, you find that he often had to explain himself, defend his actions, and his decisions. Yet, Paul continued to love them and endure their lack of gratitude. To this discouraged church, Paul shares some things that are just as applicable to us as they were the church at Corinth almost 2,000 years ago.

A. A Task Assigned (v. 1)

The task is that as they join the Lord in what He is doing, they must never forget about, negate, or overlook the grace He has made available to them. He describes this forgetting and negating God’s grace as receiving the grace of God “in vain”. This is a really important admonition. “Grace” refers both to God’s undeserved favor in saving them and, also, His undeserved enabling of them to obey Him as His child. We are saved by God’s grace and we are enabled to obey God by His grace. The word translated “vain” means “empty”. When we seek to earn our own salvation, we are ignoring His grace and thereby miss salvation. Also, when we have received true salvation which is ours as a gift of God and then seek to endure and to obey in our own strength, we are treating God’s enabling grace as “vain” (literally “empty”), “insufficient”, and “inadequate”. To be rather blunt, many of you are likely struggling because after being saved by grace, you have sought to love, obey, and follow Him in your own strength. In saving us and in everything that God requires us to do, to endure, to overcome, we must have His grace to enable us to do it. That is a glorious truth!

We must not put aside or ignore the enabling grace of God that saved us and empowers us to live a life of obedience. 1 Corinthians 15:10: “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.” If you only see God’s grace as saving us from sin, you are taking the grace of God for obeying Him in vain.

B. A Time Allotted (v. 2)

While I believe that the grace Paul is primarily dealing with in verse 1 is God’s enabling, equipping grace for believers, there is also an application concerning God’s saving grace. There

were obviously some in Corinth who heard the Gospel from Paul or others but had not yet experienced the amazing saving grace of God. They may have believed certain facts, and even professed Christ, but there was no transformed life that comes only when one casts himself completely on Christ alone for salvation. To these, Paul in verse 2 pulls a warning from Isaiah 49:8. The theme of verse 2 is the urgency to receive the saving grace of God. Here is a summary of what was happening. Some of the unsaved Corinthians were being led astray by the false teaching of salvation by works, and some were trusting God and receiving salvation by grace but were seeking to please and obey Him based on flesh empowered works. To those who had missed salvation, Paul employs Isaiah to call them to salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone, but there is urgency involved.

Is there urgency in your desire to get the Gospel to those who have never come to Christ? We see that urgency not only in Isaiah but in many other Old Testament passages. John MacArthur summarizes it well.

There is a time in God's grace when He may be sought by sinners. The Lord warned the pre-flood world, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever" (Genesis 6:3). Isaiah 55:6 commands, "Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near." Hosea warned that apostate Israel "will go with their flocks and herds to seek the Lord, but they will not find Him; He has withdrawn from them" (Hosea 5:6).

[John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 2 Corinthians*, page 225]

There is urgency concerning salvation. The last part of 2 Corinthians 6:2 says, "Behold, now is the acceptable time, behold, now is the day of salvation." Jesus tells us in John 6:44: "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." We can't just decide to be saved anytime – unless the Lord draws us to Him, we will not be saved because we are told in Ephesians 2:1: "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins." That is why salvation is of the Lord. Ephesians 2:4-5: "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." Listen carefully, understanding that salvation is of the Lord should never hinder or squelch our sense of urgency in seeking to bring people to Christ. The God who accomplishes the ends also ordains the means, and the means of bringing people to Christ is to pray for the lost, plead with the lost knowing that, "now is 'the acceptable time,' behold, now is 'the day of salvation.'"

C. A Tragedy Avoided (v. 3)

The word translated "discredited" literally means to mock or ridicule. Paul knew that some would reject the grace of God, but he did not want it to be because he had put an "offense" (literally, "stumbling block") in their way. He is saying, "May nothing in us be a stumbling block that leads to the mocking of the Gospel." The purity of those who make up the church must be guarded and kept at all costs. When we act just like the world, we "give cause for offense" and we cause our ministry to be discredited and we put a stumbling block in the path of those we have influence over.

The path of endurance starts with receiving and relying on the grace of God to save us, empower us and keep us from ever being a stumbling block to the ministry of the Gospel.

II. The Process of Endurance (vv. 4-7)

Because God so highly values endurance, He allows (and even engineers) hardships for us to develop endurance. He also uses pleasant and precious things to build in us endurance. Let's look at some specifics.

A. Things That Are Painful (vv. 4-5)

In verses 4-5 Paul lists nine types of adversities that he had experienced that God used to develop endurance in him. It is not necessarily these exact painful adversities that God will use with us, but it will be adversities like these. Don't be shocked when they come! Nothing can come into your life that God has not allowed!

The first thing he shows us is "*afflictions*". It is translated "troubles" in the NIV. The same word is used in Acts 14:22b: "Through many *tribulations* we must enter the kingdom of God." This word includes physical, spiritual, and emotional suffering. The second painful thing is *hardships*. This word refers to general difficulties that come from living in a fallen world. It is translated "needs" in the NKJV. The next word is *distresses*. It refers to being constrained with no way to get out. It is translated "calamities" in the *ESV* and "difficulties" in the *HCSB*.

In verse 5, we see that God uses *beatings*. These beatings can be with the fists, a whip, or rods. You may be saying, "at least we don't have to deal with that one." Here in the USA and in the Bible belt that is generally true, but there are thousands if not millions who face the possibilities of beatings daily. The list continues with *imprisonments*. That one is not widespread here ... yet, but it is certainly happening in much of the world now. Next is *tumults*. That speaks of riots or mob violence. Next is *labors*. That refers to grueling work and goes with the next one – *sleeplessness*. The sleeplessness is likely because of the grueling labors.

All of these accomplish something in the life of the believer that is valuable in God's eyes – it is endurance (v. 4). This Greek word cannot adequately be translated by a single English word. It means to bear up under a load, to remain steadfast in the face of death and suffering. It is certainly way more than just keeping on the path we are supposed to be on, but it does mean that. Endurance is true grit, but it comes through things that are painful.

B. Things That Are Positive (vv. 6-7)

Endurance, true grit also is deepened by these positive things. The first is "purity". This Greek word speaks of purity of life, thought, and motive. The power from God to endure comes to those who have a pattern of walking in purity. That word refers to being above reproach which is listed in the requirements for a deacon or an elder. It is of vital importance to every believer. In addition to purity is knowledge. In this context it is primarily referring to knowledge of the Scriptures. The next quality is patience. That refers to tolerance with people and their idiosyncrasies (weirdness). God always puts people around us that tests our patience. The next quality is kindness. That is one of the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit. It speaks of goodness in action – not just words. The next is described as "in the holy Spirit." This is a reminder that none of these qualities are manufactured in the power of our own flesh. The last one in verse 6 is "genuine love." "Genuine" refers to that which is without hypocrisy. This love, like goodness is the fruit of the Spirit.

In verse 7 we see more positive things that deepen endurance. The first is the Scriptures. There is no substitute for being filled with the Word of God to bring about endurance. In addition to

the Word of God, there is the power of the Holy Spirit when he fills our life, and the weapons of righteousness. That is likely referring to the Christians armor in Ephesians 6:10-17:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

God uses things that are painful and things that are positive to bring about endurance in our lives. If you chafe at the painful things and neglect the positive things, you will never have endurance, true grit. You will become either discouraged, depressed, negative, a whiner with a critical spirit, and a person who misses the glorious wonder of developing endurance.

III. The Paradox of Endurance (vv. 8-10)

In these last verses of our text, Paul gives us a series of paradoxes that show us what a life of endurance looks like. These don't need a lot of commentary, but they are so helpful. Those who have developed endurance will experience these paradoxes.

- A. Glory and Dishonor – Those who learn endurance, true grit will be looked to as one who manifests the life of Christ and considered a dishonored fool for serving a God who brought you into tough, hard, painful times.
- B. Evil Report and Good Report – Some will think you are crazy and others an example to follow.
- C. A Deceiver and a Person of Truth – We see that so clearly in Paul's life. Some wanted to kill him, and some looked to him as a hero in the faith.
- D. Unknown and Well Known
- E. Dying and Yet Alive – Paul seemed to always be close to death. His enemies were constantly trying to take his life, but God did not allow him to die until he finished the work God had for him to do.
- F. Punished and Yet Not Put to Death – Paul was beaten, deprived of some of the needs of life and yet always delivered from his enemies until it was God's time to bring him home.
- G. Sorrowful Yet Always Rejoicing – He was broken over the lost – especially his own kinsman the Jews. He said in Romans 9:2-3: "that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Yet, he was the one who wrote to the Philippians in Philippians 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!"

H. Poor, Yet Making Many Rich – His poverty was only in the possessions of this world. When it came to eternity, he was wealthy beyond imagination.

I. Having Nothing and Yet Possessing All Things – The “nothing” once again was referring to earthly possessions. However, in that which is eternal Romans 8:32: “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”

Conclusion

Christ is exalted in our endurance. A life of endurance is not easily attained. It is not in a formula or praying a rote prayer. It starts with knowing Christ, but it is developed over a lifetime of learning from trials, disappointments, and learning from those trials and disappointments that Jesus is better – better than anything.

NASB (New American Standard Bible)

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